DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 411 721 HE 030 440

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TITLE Academic Delay of Gratification in Conditionally-Admissible Minority College Students.
PUB DATE 1997-03-00
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 24-28, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Beliefs; Black Students; College Admission; *College Students; *Delay of Gratification; *Educational Attitudes; *High Risk Students; Higher Education; Metacognition; *Racial Differences; Self Efficacy; Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Student Motivation; Study Skills; White Students
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; Conditional Admission

ABSTRACT

This study compared academic delay of gratification (ADOG) among conditionally-admitted African-American, regularly-admitted African-American, and regularly-admitted white college students. A total of 44 conditionally-admitted African-American students, 43 regularly-admitted African-American students, and 273 regularly-admitted Caucasian students from the same university completed the Academic Delay of Gratification Scale (ADOGS) and the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). It was found that although there were no significant differences between the reported ADOG of regularly- and conditionally-admitted African-American students, the conditionally-admitted group was higher in extrinsic motivation, organization, critical thinking, peer learning, and help seeking. Overall ADOG scores were significantly higher for the regularly-admitted African-American students than for the Caucasian students, however. In addition, regularly-admitted African-American students reported higher use of rehearsal and metacognition than regularly-admitted Caucasian students, although the reverse obtained for control beliefs and self-efficacy. A copy of the ADOGS is included. (Contains 15 references.) (MDM)

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Academic Delay of Gratification in Conditionally-Admissible Minority College Students

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Abstract

Academic delay of gratification (ADOG) refers to students' willingness to postpone immediately available opportunities to satisfy impulses in favor of academic goals that are temporally remote but ostensibly more valuable. This study examined whether (a) conditionally- (N = 44) and regularly-admitted African-American college students (N = 43) would differ in their academic delay of gratification (assessed by the Academic Delay of Gratification Scale: ADOGS), and (b) whether regularly-admitted African-American students would differ from their Caucasian peers (N = 273). Although there was no significant difference between the reported ADOG of regularly- and conditionally-admitted African-American students, the conditionally-admitted group was higher in extrinsic motivation, organization, critical thinking, peer learning, and help seeking. ADOG was significantly higher for regularly-admitted African-American than for Caucasians, however. In addition, regularly-admitted African-Americans reported higher use of rehearsal and metacognition than regularly-admitted Caucasian students, although the reverse obtained for control beliefs and self-efficacy. Results supported previous studies of African-Americans' delay of gratification by Banks, McQuater, Ross, and Ward (1992).

One of the hallmarks of student's self regulation of learning is the ability to remain task focused by protecting task-specific intentions from non-task alternatives (Corno, 1989; Hecklausen, 1991; Zimmerman, 1994), Because such protection often involves forgoing an attractive, immediately obtainable goal (e. g., going to the movies), this tendency can be linked to Mischel's (1981) concept of delay of gratification (DG), which is defined as students' willingness to postpone immediately available opportunities to satisfy impulses in favor of academic goals that are temporally remote but ostensibly more valuable (Banks, McQuater, Anthony & Ward (1992). Delay of gratification would be especially critical for such tasks as regulating one's academic study time (Zimmerman, Greenberg, & Weinstein, 1994). As a general tendency, DG has been related to academic success and achievement motivation. Mischel, Shoda, and Peake (1989), found, for example, that children who opted to delay gratification as preschoolers, as adolescents achieved more during high school, were more verbally fluent, and academically and socially competent than were children who had short delay of gratification.

DG has been assessed in several different ways. Whereas Mischel's studies of children employed a behavioral technique, questionnaires have been used to assess DG in adults. For example, Ward, Perry, Woltz, and Doolin (1989) studied delay of gratification in African-Americans university student leaders by obtaining preferences between immediate and delayed alternatives (e. g., "Go to a favorite concert and risk getting a bad grade, or stay home and study to get a better grade."). Preferences for the delayed alternatives were related to students' sociopolitical views and consumer preferences, but not to their career choices or academic decisions. Ray and Najman's (1986) Deferment of Gratification Questionnaire (DGQ) employed a Likert response format with statements such as "Would you describe yourself as often being too impulsive for your own good?" Using this scale, Witt (1990) found that delay was related to students' satisfaction with the university and social responsibility. Despite evidence of relationships between DG and learning-related outcomes, these studies suggested that further psychometric development was required, primarily the need to focus on specific situations rather than to assess global individual differences.

Following the successful strategy used in constructing the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ: García & Pintrich, 1995; Pintrich, et al., 1993), Bembenutty and Karabenick (1996) developed a course-specific Academic Delay of Gratification Scale (ADOGS) on which students rated their preference for an immediately-available attractive option, such as "Going to a favorite concert, play, or sporting event, even though it may mean getting a lower grade on an exam *in this class* to be taken the next day," versus a delayed alternative, such as "Staying home and studying to increase your chances of getting a higher grade." By narrowing the target to a specific class they demonstrate an extensive network of associations between ADOG and students' motivational tendencies and their use of learning strategies. Direct relationships were found such that students with higher ADOG reported greater uses of cognitive strategies (rehearsal elaboration, organization, critical thinking), metacognition (planning, monitoring, and regulating), and the regulating of time/study environment, effort, and seeking help from others. No relationships

were found, however between ADOG and control beliefs, test anxiety, and peer learning. In addition, relationships between motivation and learning strategy use and the ADOGS were more pronounced than with for Ray and Najman's (1989) generic delay questionnaire (DGQ) or with an index of impulsivity-Buss and Plomin's Emotionality, Activity, and Sociability (EAS) scale (Buss, 1995).

Description of the Present study

The present study expands our knowledge of ADOG by focusing on participants in programs that are designed primarily for minority students who conditionally fail to meet the standard criteria for college admission, which we will refer to a "conditionally-admitted." From previous empirical evidence, we would expect such students to differ in several respects from regularly-admitted students, in addition to their ostensibly lower grades and/or admission test scores. Specially, they should not be as likely to delay gratification. In addition, from their past performance, they should manifest lower levels of motivation for academic work and use of learning strategies. In order to test for differences as a function of admission status, we compared the conditionally-admitted students to a regularly-admitted student group enrolled in the same course during the previous academic year (Bembenutty & Karabenick, 1996). Because the regularly-admitted student group was racially heterogeneous, only the minority students were used in this comparison. Additional information about ADOG was obtained by comparing minority versus non-minority students in the regularly-admitted group.

Method

Participants

Participants were 44 African Americans participating (15 males and 29 females) in the College Interactive Program* (CIP) that is conducted during a college Summer Term at a large midwestern public university. Requirements for admission include having at least a 2.00 GPA, participation in an interview, and on-campus summer residence, and/or getting a low score on the college entrance examination (SAT or ACT). All CIP students take two courses, which are special sections of introductory psychology and English. Students are also provided with two hours of required tutoring each day, weekly meetings with a mentor, and work in campus employment for 10 hours per week. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured by appropriate coding procedures. Students obtained credit in the course for their participation.

For comparison purpose, 316 regularly-admitted college students from the same university participated during the previous Fall term. The students self-identified as 18 African-American males, 25 African-American females, 165 Caucasian females, and 108 Caucasian males. All students gave their written consent to participate in the study and to obtain their final grade in the course from their instructors, which were different in the two courses, by using only their student identification number. Preliminary analyses yielded sex differences. However, because the proportional of males and females was virtually identical in all groups compared, gender could not confound the results and was therefore not considered further.

Assessment

All students completed the 10-item in the ADOGS, shown in Table 1, the MSLQ, and ancillary demographic information regular class periods. Internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) estimates for the ADOGS were .72 for regularly-admitted and conditionally-admitted student groups. Six scales from the MSLQ assess motivational tendencies: intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientation, task value, control beliefs, self-efficacy, and test anxiety. The nine learning strategy scales of the MSLQ, divided into cognitive, metacognition, and self-regulation are: rehearsal, elaboration, organization, critical thinking, metacognition, time/study regulation, effort regulation, peer learning, and help seeking. Although the conditionally-admitted students were assessed in both psychology and English courses, we focused only on the psychology course, which was the course used for the regularly-admitted students.

Results

Comparison Between Regularly- and Conditionally-Admitted African-American Students

Table 2 presents means and standard deviations for ADOGS and MSLQ scores for both African-American student groups. We first tested, using MANOVA, whether the groups differed on the entire vector of dimensions assessed. The multivariate F (16, 55) = 4.96 was significant ($p < .001$), and subsequent univariate ANOVAs were computed. Although there was no significant difference between the reported ADOG of regularly- and conditionally-admitted African-American students, the conditionally-admitted group was higher in extrinsic motivation ($p < .001$), organization ($p < .005$), critical thinking ($p < .01$), peer learning ($p < .001$), and help seeking ($p < .001$).

Comparison Between Regularly -Admitted African-American and Caucasian Students

Table 3 presents means and standard deviations for ADOGS and MSLQ scores for both regularly-admitted student groups. Once again we tested, using MANOVA, whether the groups differed on the entire vector of dimensions assessed. The multivariate F (16, 268) = 2.14 was significant ($p < .01$), and subsequent univariate ANOVAs were computed. ADOG was significantly higher for regularly-admitted African-American than for Caucasians ($p < .003$). In addition, regularly-admitted African-Americans reported higher use of rehearsal (p .02) and metacognition ($p < .05$) than regularly-admitted Caucasian students, although the reverse obtained for control beliefs ($p < .03$) and self-efficacy ($p < .02$).

Discussion

The findings of this study did not support the hypotheses that conditionally-admitted African-American students would have lower ADOG than regularly-admitted African-Americans. In addition to no evidence of lower ADOG, the conditionally-admitted students appeared to be more engaged in

learning as indicated by their greater use of learning strategies. Although we cannot rule out confounding differences between instructors, it is possible that the conditionally-admitted students were more motivated because their performance in the class determined whether they could remain at the university.

The higher ADOG of African-Americans than their Caucasian peers is relevant for the continuing controversy that surrounds this issue. This result is consistent with evidence from Banks, McQuater, Anthony, and Ward (1992), who argue there is little support for lower delay of gratification among African Americans than Caucasians. Not only was their ADOG higher, the African-American students were somewhat more engaged in learning as evidenced by being more likely to report using rehearsal and metacognition than did the Caucasian students.

The present study suggests the importance of ADOG as an individual difference dimension in adult learners that can be effectively used along with the MSLQ and the LASSI (Weinstein, Shulte, & Palmer, 1987), and further that ADOGS might be included as a separate scale in comprehensive learning strategy assessment devices (e.g., the MSLQ).

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* To maintain confidentiality, the name of the program has been changed.

Table 1

Academic Delay of Gratification Scale (ADOGS)

Below is a series of choices between two alternative courses of action. Please read each set of statements carefully **Relate each statement to this introductory psychology course. Then tell which course of action you would be more likely to choose and the strength of that choice.** Thus, when the statement contain the phase "this course" you should think of this introductory psychology course. There are no right or wrong answers.

It is important that your responses reflect your likely choice. That is, **tell us what you really would do** under the conditions described in the statements. Please respond with your true beliefs rather than the way you think you should respond. Please do this by placing a √ in front of that choice. Use the scale below to answer the questions.

_Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

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1. A. Go to a favorite concert, play, or sporting event and study less for this course even though it may mean getting a lower grade on an exam you will take tomorrow, or
   B. Stay home and study to increase your chances of getting a higher grade.
   _Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

2. A. Study a little every day for an exam in this course and spend less time with your friends, or
   B. Spend more time with your friends and cram just before the test.
   _Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

3. A. Miss several classes to accept an invitation for a very interesting trip, or
   B Delay going on the trip until this course is over.
   _Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

4. A. Go to a party the night before a test in this course and study only if you have time, or
   B. Study first and party only if you have time.
   _Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

5. A. Spend most of your time studying just the interesting material in this course even though it may mean not doing so well, or
   B. Study all the material that is assigned to increase your chances of doing well in the course.
   _Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

6. A. Skip this class when the weather is nice and try to get the notes from somebody later, or
   B Attend class to make certain that you do not miss something even though the weather is nice outside
   _Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

7. A. Stay in the library to make certain that you finish an assignment in this course that is due the next day, or
   B. Leave to have fun with your friends and try to complete it when you get home later that night.
   _Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

8. A. Study for this course in a place with a lot of pleasant distractions even though it may mean not learning the material, or
   B. Study in a place where there are fewer distractions to increase the likelihood that you will learn the material.
   _Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

9. A. Leave right after this class to do something you like even though it means possibly not understanding some material for the exam, or
   B. Stay after class to ask your instructor to clarify some material for an exam that you do not understand.
   _Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

10. A. Select now an instructor for this course who is fun even though he/she does not a good job covering the course material. or
    B. Wait for an instructor for this course who is not much fun but who does a good job covering the course material.
    _Definitely choose A _Probably choose A _Probably choose B _Definitely choose B

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Table 2

Mean Academic Delay of Gratification, Motivational Tendencies, and Learning Strategy Use Among Regularly- and Conditionally-Admitted African-American College Students

	Group		
	Regularly-Admitted ($N = 43$)	Conditionally-Admitted ($N = 44$)	
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*p*-value*
ADGS	3.04 (0.45)	3.09 (0.50)	ns
MSLQ			
Motivation			
Intrinsic Goal Orientation	5.01 (1.01)	5.12 (0.92)	ns
Extrinsic Goal Orientation	5.59 (0.89)	6.31 (0.76)	.001
Task Value	5.34 (1.18)	5.15 (1.33)	ns
Control of Learning Beliefs	5.30 (1.23)	5.49 (0.98)	ns
Self-Efficacy	4.91 (1.39)	5.38 (1.06)	ns
Test Anxiety	4.21 (1.45)	4.27 (1.47)	ns
Learning Strategies			
Rehearsal	5.05 (1.27)	5.05 (1.21)	ns
Elaboration	4.78 (1.07)	4.96 (0.94)	ns
Organization	3.94 (1.25)	4.72 (1.19)	.005
Critical Thinking	4.27 (1.14)	4.78 (0.87)	.01
Metacognition	4.62 (0.91)	4.76 (0.88)	ns
Time and Study	4.85 (1.10)	5.30 (0.82)	ns
Effort Regulation	5.09 (1.16)	4.76 (1.06)	ns
Peer Learning	3.24 (1.70)	4.91 (1.50	.001
Help Seeking	3.54 (1.27)	4.81 (1.23)	.001

*Note— *P*-values are for univariate *F*-ratios.
MANOVA using all variables: $F(16,55) = 4.92$, $p < .001$.

Table 3

Mean Academic Delay of Gratification, Motivational Tendencies, and Learning Strategy Use Among Regularly-Admitted College Students

	Ethnic Group		
	African-American ($N = 43$)	Caucasian ($N = 273$)	
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*p*-value*
ADGS	3.04 (0.45)	2.79 (0.47)	.003
MSLQ			
Motivation			
Intrinsic Goal Orientation	5.01 (1.01)	4.81 (1.00)	ns
Extrinsic Goal Orientation	5.59 (0.89)	5.37 (1.12)	ns
Task Value	5.34 (1.18)	5.41 (1.20)	ns
Control of Learning Beliefs	5.30 (1.23)	5.76 (0.89)	.03
Self-Efficacy	4.91 (1.39)	5.53 (1.09)	.02
Test Anxiety	4.21 (1.45)	3.75 (1.33)	ns
Learning Strategies			
Rehearsal	5.05 (1.27)	4.52 (1.26)	.02
Elaboration	4.78 (1.07)	4.62 (1.08)	ns
Organization	3.94 (1.25)	3.72 (1.20)	ns
Critical Thinking	4.27 (1.14)	4.20 (1.28)	ns
Metacognition	4.62 (0.91)	4.26 (0.96)	.05
Time and Study	4.85 (1.10)	4.60 (1.18)	ns
Effort Regulation	5.09 (1.16)	4.81 (1.35)	ns
Peer Learning	3.24 (1.70)	2.89 (1.44)	ns
Help Seeking	3.54 (1.27)	3.42 (1.29)	ns

*Note: *P*-values are for univariate *F*-ratios.
MANOVA using all variables: $F(16,268) = 2.14$, $p < .01$.